



NEWS RELEASE

PRESS OFFICE

Release Date: December 2, 1999
Release Number: 99-98

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NEW 'PRODUCT-IMPROVED' U.S. BUSINESS ADVISOR GIVES FIRMS MORE OPTIONS, FASTER SERVICE

WASHINGTON – The federal government's premier website for business-related information has been substantially upgraded and redesigned and is now ready to provide a broader range of electronic services at faster speeds. The new system was unveiled today by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and Vice President Al Gore's National Partnership for Reinventing Government (NPR).

The refurbished *U.S. Business Advisor* (<http://www.business.gov>) supplies easy on-line access to many of the most frequently asked questions about businesses and the federal government. It also provides interactive tools that can be used to find solutions to situations involving the environment, health and safety, and permits companies to download many of the forms necessary for regulatory compliance.

Since 1996, this website has been providing 'one-stop shopping' for small businesses on a wide range of topics, including business development, financing, taxes, laws and regulations. The rollout of this latest version of the *U.S. Business Advisor* took place in Washington, DC during the SBA's Vision 2000 conference, an event that gives national exposure to state and local initiatives in small business development.

"We have completely overhauled the *U.S. Business Advisor* site to help small firms save time, be more productive and find government information and services with the click of a mouse – anytime, anywhere," said SBA Deputy Administrator Fred Hochberg, who presided over the rollout. **"We believe it is a powerful tool to increase our outreach to the business community and at the same time, will make public access to the government easier and more effective. I think it will forever change the interaction between government and business."**

"Federal agencies across the board have embraced the challenge of automating their basic services," said Morley Winograd, Senior Policy Advisor to Vice President Gore and NPR Director. **"Through the *Advisor* and other initiatives like the *Online Classroom* and *Online Women's Business Center*, SBA has been one of our e-gov pioneers. The Vice President's vision is to use information technology to deliver comprehensive service to citizens in productive and cost-effective ways. The new and improved *U.S. Business Advisor* is one of the ways we're fulfilling that vision."**

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New and improved technical features include more powerful and focused search engines; database-driven dynamic web page development; a correspondence tracking system to provide better customer service; and a fully developed administrative interface for federal webmasters.

In addition to the services already mentioned, the *U.S. Business Advisor* can be used to:

- Access electronic commerce services, ranging from loan information to trademark registration, export licenses, payroll benefits, and tax filing;
- Use web-based tutorials and online classroom training to find other sources of counseling, education, and training;
- Interact with buyers and suppliers of equity capital, contracting opportunities, trade leads, innovation, and research grants;
- Create a tailored web page to support international trade activities;
- Access laws, regulations, and guidance; and
- Seek and receive e-mail advice and counseling.

During an extensive 18-month review period, private and public sector designers, with the support and feedback of the business community and more than a dozen federal agencies, built the new technical architecture of the *U.S. Business Advisor*.

The SBA, established in 1953, provides financial, technical and management assistance to help Americans start, run, and grow their businesses. With a portfolio of business loans, loan guarantees and disaster loans worth more than \$45 billion, the SBA is the nation's largest single financial backer of small businesses. Last year, the SBA offered management and technical assistance to more than one million small business owners.

The National Partnership for Reinventing Government is a White House interagency task force headed by Vice President Gore. Its mission is to create a government that works better, costs less, and gets results the American people care about. It is the longest-running government reform effort in U.S. history.

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